WORDS

OF

RECONCILIATION.

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE,

DEVOTED TO

THE INTERESTS OF THE ONE CHURCH OF THE ONE LORD.

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No. 2022 Delancey Place, Philadelphia, Pa.

VOLUME VII.

By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.—COL. i, 20.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY THE FRANKLIN PRINTING CO., 516 AND 518 MINOR ST

Entered at the Post Office at Philadelphia as second class matter.

TERMS.—$1.00 per year in advance. In clubs of five or more, 75 cents per copy.

V. 7
1891

WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

VOL. VII.] JANUARY, 1891. [No. 1.

SHEOL AGAIN.

We are not surprised that the article in our last number, entitled "Where is Sheol?" should have provoked some criticism. An aged minister from Central New York, while approving the magazine as "spreading a table each month that is better and richer," writes to caution us that Sheol in the Old Testament has but one primary meaning —the grave—although occasionally used in a tropical sense, as when Jonah compares the whale's belly in which he was shut up to sheol or hell. In the same line a critic in *The Herald of Life* speaks of the article as a mere vain philosophizing upon a matter about which we can know nothing, except as the Word of God may give us glimpses. He then proceeds to give the sixty-five instances in which the word "Sheol" occurs in the Old Testament, where it is rendered "hell" thirty-one times, "grave" thirty-one times, and "pit" three times. From these he infers that the word plainly signifies the grave or pit into which the earth receives the dead bodies consigned to it, and in which "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom," the good and the bad being alike unconscious.

We have no disposition to dispute the meaning these

critics put upon the word, especially when they admit, as does the first, that it is sometimes used tropically. The general meaning of both Sheol and hades is the abode of the dead. The real point at issue relates to the existence and possible self-consciousness of the spirits of these dead before resurrection. To the eye of sense, and of critical science, all that we can see or know of man passes at death into the hands of the destructive forces of Nature which seem to swallow him up in their devouring pit. Science seems to unite its voice with the despairing utterance that breaks out here and there in the Old Testament that the "dead know not anything." But, as we have often shown, and as our critics admit, the distinctive hope of revelation is the hope of resurrection. This implies that there is something to be raised. If man becomes extinct, if his existence ceases at death, there is nothing of him to come forth. But the analogies of Nature teach, as does the New Testament, that there is dormant life in every form of death. The dying seed, rotting in the earth, could not produce another plant unless a living germ survived through all the process of decay. Much easier is it to believe that in the higher form of life in man there is something that survives the grave's destruction. The whole fabric of Christianity, which rests upon a doctrine of resurrection of the dead, falls to pieces unless it be true that death does not make an end of man. The only question between these critics and us, therefore, is as to the nature of this indestructible element and as to how it is preserved until its reconstruction in personal manhood. In the article referred to we suggested, without positively committing ourselves to, a solution which seems to us to

suit the facts in the case as revealed in both science and Scripture.

If there is anything plain in Scripture it is that it assumes the existence of the dead to be somehow bound up with that of the living. This is about the only hope of a future life the earlier books of the Bible recognize. The fundamental hope they bring to view is one that was to be realized in a "seed." God's people, His chosen nation, was to survive, however the fathers might fall asleep or death mow down successive generations, and to finally realize its destiny and enter upon its full heritage of blessing. Nothing is plainer also than that the fathers and these generations of the dead were to be included in this subsequent release and triumph. When the patriarchs died they were "gathered unto their people." By faith Joseph, foreseeing the future of his people, "gave commandment concerning his bones." The conception of salvation on the part of these ancients was as foreign as could be from the popular heaven of modern Christianity. It was that of a finally emancipated people of God, dwelling on the earth in loving obedience and happy concord with Him. And the final vision of the New Testament is just this, of a redeemed humanity organized into one glorious commonwealth on a renovated earth upon which shines down the glory of the opened heavens. But, as we have seen, it is fundamental in Christianity that the dead shall in some way be preserved and restored to a place in this better country and continuing city, in the faith of which the heroes among them died. We must therefore either conceive of their shadowy spirits as grouped together in some unknown abode in the heights or depths of the universe,

or we must suppose that they still hold relation to the earth and to the human race. The latter idea has vastly more to commend it in Scripture; and if science, either as biology or psychology, can be permitted to have a voice here, it certainly will be dumb and perhaps derisive over the first hypothesis, while it may reverently confirm the latter. The only kind of perpetuated life it knows anything about is that which is transmitted along a line of descent. It will not be strange if the final reconciliation between science and Christianity upon this question of a future life will be found right here, in the recognition that the Bible agrees with science in teaching that the race is continued in the line of its descendants; only the Bible goes further and teaches, what science certainly is not prepared to dispute, that past lives which have apparently been lost in the contributions they have made to existing lives are not really lost, but treasured up in the lives that sprang out of them, and that what has gone into these existing lives may again be evolved out of them. It teaches, further, that an elect seed, in reaching the goal of perfected life—the heavenly manhood—acquire power to help forward to the same goal other lives linked in with theirs. The pre-eminent example of this is our Lord Jesus, who gathered up into His person the broken life common to the race, to the end that through His triumph over death "all shall be made alive." But the law of the Head is the law for all the members of this body of elect humanity. The works that He did shall they do also, for even they were sent to "cast out demons and raise the dead" (Matt. x, 8), and in the power of His resurrection they must enter into all the fruits and activities of His victory over death.

About these main facts all Christians are agreed. The only question raised by us in the article criticized is whether these wonders and triumphs may not all be wrought along the well-known lines through which God works in the realms of life of which we have some cognizance. May not the existence of the dead be preserved in the lives that we see before us springing out of their decay —we mean their descendants, whose springs of life were in them, and who are their reproduction? It is at once objected that this is simply a form of re-incarnation and that the personality of the dead is lost and merged in that of the living. But this loss is just what the Christian doctrine provides against. Its hope of resurrection is a hope that these dead shall be individually restored. Its doctrine of salvation through the triumph of a select seed —the fittest—is that these fittest become a fructifying source of new and better life to those behind them who failed to reach their goal. The Church raised with Christ becomes the seed of this wider harvest. These first-born from the dead become the helpers and deliverers of the later born.

They, as victors, acquire power through death, as did He, to wield the hidden power of the universe and to enter into the hearts and bodies of men for their help and their deliverance. In His last tender words Jesus assures them again and again that the works He did they shall do, and that they are sent of Him as He was sent of the Father. In fact, as the members of the human body execute the mandates of the Head, so—we speak with reverence—there is no other way in which the Head of this Christ-body can carry on this work of saving mankind except through His own chosen members.

What conception of humanity, then, does all this give us?

It is that of a race which is an organism in which there are heights of being reached by those members of it who have laid hold of eternal life, and depths in which are embosomed and concealed the masses of the unjust dead. The old schoolmen propounded a riddle in the question, "How many myriads of souls could dance together on the point of a needle?" They thus had some conception of the infinitely little. Modern biology does not answer this question with regard to the soul, but it astonishes us with its revelation of the myriads of sentient beings that go to make up a single human body. And below its deepest depths there is a deeper. This analogy drawn from the constitution of the body may illustrate, if it does not explain, how the secret depths of each man's soul may be the harbor of other souls who are helping him on to victory in the struggle of life, or who are clogging his way and hanging on to his skirts if so be that in his upward progress they may be lifted up. In Swedenborg's conception of the heavenly world and of the societies that compose it, each of these societies had the form of a man, while the total had the form of a grand and universal man. Underlying this conception is this truth, that the race as a whole and in its parts is an organism in which the righteous dead are active as the saviours and life-givers of the whole and in which the unrighteous dead are hidden, undergoing suffering and purgation until judgment in them is brought forth to victory.

We are hewing close to the line of Scripture when we make the human organism the pattern of things in the

heavens and the depository of that omnipresent energy of God by which He is subduing all things unto Himself. The Church as a body comes to the stature of a perfect man, and, of the divided bands of humanity, the living and the dead, He makes of twain one new man, so making peace. And the units of force in this great economy of God are living men.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

At the opening of each new year, some of our readers are accustomed to cast a new horoscope and to read anew the signs of the times, anxious for fresh tokens of the near approach of the Son of Man. To them we would say, While the manifestation of the Son of Man is to be ardently waited for, He is now at hand to those whose eyes are opened to discern Him. The saints who have died in Him, our own beloved dead whom we have followed with straining eyes as the mists of the unseen land veiled them from our sight, are also here, around us and with us as we struggle on. Their full resurrection has not come, if we understand by it their investiture with the final glory of redeemed manhood, but in a most important and scriptural sense they are already risen with Christ, and now live and reign with Him. We would urge our friends who are anxiously watching for the coming of the Son of Man to think less of this event as a downburst of splendor out of heaven, and more of it as a manifestation of glories that lie hidden all around us. Heaven and Hell are now near us —yea, in us as our lives are conformed to one or the other. The dead are not far away. They are struggling and suffering in the hell of human misery around us. We

may help and succor them here and now. And the companionship and intercourse of Heaven are not wholly of the future. Only a thin veil divides us now from the saintly dead who have gone before us, and who surround and succor us in ways as unknown as were the horses and chariots of fire that filled the mountains round about Elisha unknown to Gehazi. What we all need is that our eyes be opened. Then the mysteries of heaven and hell, of a present suffering and of a future blessed humanity, of a devil who hath but a short time, and of a coming triumphant Christ who shall bruise him under our feet, and who shall reign forever and ever will all be disclosed.

UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH UNTO ALL THE GENERATIONS OF THE AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END, AMEN.

LETTERS FROM THE REV. CHARLES BEECHER.

We desire to make this magazine a means of eliciting truth, as well as the channel for our own statement of it. So long as, from the necessities of this imperfect state, we all know only in part, it is needful that we be helpers one of another. The views of such a devout and able thinker as Mr. Beecher cannot but be helpful and inspiring, and we are glad to share with our readers the benefit of these letters.

WYSOX, PA., October 31st, 1890.

DEAR BROTHER:—There are some propositions which seem intuitively true. They shine by their own light, and illumine everything around them. There are other propositions that seem to emit a fog.

In my boyhood days the intellect of the Churches was wrestling with the problem how a man could be a sinner without having sinned. Sisyphus rolled that stone up again and again, and sweated at it, only to see it roll back. As Homer hath it:

"αυταρ επειτα πεδονδε χυλινδετο λαας αναιθης."

I was born and bred in the midst of that controversy. In my twelfth year I heard my brother George say that brother Edward believed in pre-existence. It was like lighting a match in a dark room where you have been stumbling round, knocking over chairs and tables. It was instantaneous. I knew that it was true, and have never doubted it from that hour. All my thinking has been from that standpoint, namely, enthroned with Christ in Heaven as native land and home, in Jerusalem above, mother of us all, and surveying all truth, all history, all philosophy, all science, all prophecy from that elevation and in that glorious light.

It would make anybody smile if I should say that redemption and civil service reform are akin, are identical.

But I do say it. The universe, however large, is nothing but God's family. And He being love, wants His children to live together happily. But pride, fraud, and selfishness cannot be made to produce the fruits of meekness, truth, and self-control. Corruption entered the family (*i. e.*, the intelligent universe) in the same way that it enters families, States, Churches now.

The Morning Star of empire became corrupt on the same essential principles that princes and rulers on earth do and always have done. And it became necessary to remove him and his party and reorganize the government.

This is civil service reform and this is vicarious atonement. For the wise, truthful, and good do bear and must bear the cost of the foolish, false, and selfish. Omnipotence cannot make society where this will not be so.

The problem then is to reconcile all things (the universe)

in Heaven and on earth, under man—reconcile to God and to each other in pristine harmony.

This is done by the incarnation of the race and of the race's Head. The race are partakers of flesh and blood first, and for that reason He partakes in like manner; they are incarnate, He becomes incarnate in like manner.

Why? that through death He might bring to naught him who had the power of death—*i. e.*, power of life and death, supreme power as god of this world—prince of the power of the air. How bring to naught? By destroying his influence, by disclosing in celestial realms the facts of Christ's sufferings at his hands? Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the future universe, but unto man.

Man the race. Call the race an organism if you will, but do not materialize it, do not terrestrialize it. Man is a celestial race, and its unity is moral.

And these mortal bodies of ours are "bodies of humiliation," not *vile*, but vehicles of redemption, and if not abused, pure and holy, temples of the Holy Spirit.

He had a "form of God," a celestial body through which the divine character revealed itself to angel eyes. He took on Him the form of a servant—σωμα της ταπεινωσεως—body of humiliation. Ours is a body of humiliation in the same sense that His was. And as His was changed back to its original glory so ours will be into the likeness of the body of His glory.

This is regeneration. This is resurrection. And when complete in the whole race the work is done, the universe is reorganized and the possibility of the re-entrance of corruption by pride, fraud, and selfishness forever obviated.

Now certain details. And here we walk warily.

"Every man in his own order." Christ first and sole as head. Those who have stood against world-majorities in all past dispensations, seven watches in the night, first fruits of the race harvest, at the second advent.

All the rest by re-incarnation in the millennial age.

It is among these details that we may diverge, may

stumble. But patience. We know in part. When that which is perfect comes that which is in part shall be done away.

You will readily see from this brief outline how far I can sympathize with you in your arduous undertaking. I read your work with much interest and on many important points with full consent. I wish it were in my power to give material aid. Let me only say in closing that the *what* is more important than the *how*. Character is more than essence. We cannot know the essence of our own being, much less of the Infinite One, but we do know character. We know that He is love, meekness, truth, wisdom.

And we know that whatever acts or purposes have been ascribed to Him inconsistent with these are utterly erroneous and will roll away like night-shades before the rising sun.

Affectionately your brother,
CHARLES BEECHER.

II.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—I did not want to criticise or controvert. Every man must think out his own system for himself. I only gave you a bit of autobiography, leaving you to judge how far I could sympathize in your views.

It is not merely as a theodicy, that I believe in a celestial fatherland (Heb. xii, 16), but because the idea itself has a charm for me which I cannot express. Science may derive the notion of "loving" an idea, but nothing else would express my feeling on that. I feel as Jesus did when he said: "Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Of course, I could not accept Henry Ward's idea of evolution. Father brought us all up to do our own thinking. I used to tell Henry that the idea that the great majority of the race were like the blossoms on an apple-tree, that fell off without setting fruit, was an idea favorable to despotism. The Pharaohs might use up millions of men building pyramids. Napoleon might well call them "chair à canon"—cannon-meat.

But to me the most degraded human being that ever lived is a pearl of great price. The whole race in all its generations, historic and prehistoric, is *the pearl*, the treasure buried in the wide world-field which Jesus bought with His blood.

My objection to evolution is that I can see no redemption in it and no reconciliation. The only sin there is is ungrowth, undevelopment, the sin of a tadpole for not being a frog, of a gorilla for not being a man, of a man for not being an angel. "The Devil," says Emerson, "is arrested development."

The point which I have regarded as your strong point is "The Resurrection." Your title is the best one, WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

God in Christ reconciling not only the world unto Himself, but all things in heaven as well.

It is well to search out the philosophy of re-incarnation (though I would not use the microscope too much), but the fact that the whole race received the resurrection as a boon, the reward of Christ's victory is your grand theme. "Fight it out on that line," and "push things."

If I lived near a great library I should hunt up Rabbinical testimonies on re-incarnation. I have heard it said that the Rabbis believe in this—That Israel in all ages has been about an average number, and that they return according to some law or rule not fully known. This would explain many things—*e. g.*, Matt. xxiii, 35; Rom. ix, 11–28.

Let me hear from you whenever you feel able, and, believe me, when I bid you God speed-in your labor.

Yours fraternally,

CHARLES BEECHER.

That the Resurrection is a boon for the whole race is a tremendously strong point. Stick to it. Do not spread over too much ground. Do not bring in side issues. That one fact is sovereign—is irresistible.

CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERAL THOUGHT.

[From *The Conservator.*]

I acknowledge the courteous note in which I am requested to state succinctly my reasons "for supposing Christianity to contain the truths which the liberal thought of this generation is groping after."

It would be difficult within the limits of a brief communication to fully state these reasons. And yet I am profoundly convinced that there are concealed depths in the Christian revelation, long buried beneath traditional misinterpretations of it, which, when brought to light, will more than satisfy those cravings of the human mind which it is seeking elsewhere to appease.

When I speak of Liberal thought, I mean that type of it which is reverent and candid. What it is "groping after" is a true knowledge of God and of man. If it does not use the term "God," it yet believes in an omnipresent energy, active in the manifold operations of Nature, and that this power makes for righteousness. It seeks to find out the true relations of man to this universal power, and so to discover his origin and destiny and the

best methods of preparing for it. It therefore properly investigates and seeks to pursue the best methods of human culture, and it is wise enough to recognize the fact that the individual cannot be perfected apart from the race to which he belongs. It therefore seeks the welfare of humanity, as such, and to promote its brotherhood.

Christianity, as taught by Christ, and as illustrated in its purest models, professes to illuminate all this region of truth and to promote these ends. But traditional Christianity has often obscured the truth and defeated its mission. It has fastened upon the Bible a mechanical theory of inspiration which has blinded men to other revelations which God is making to the world in Nature, and in other historic faiths, and preventing them from understanding even its own meaning. It has framed and foisted upon mankind such false conceptions of God's relation to the race, and of His purposes toward it, that many have ceased to believe in God at all, or that the human race was being trained by Him for any high destiny, or that there is any sphere of life for man beyond the grave.

Liberal thought has been turning to science rather than Christianity for its gospel. And yet it prefers a theistic to an atheistic conception of the universe, provided it be rational. It prefers any explanation of man which raises him above the brute and gives him a divine origin and destiny, if it be only scientific.

Now, my claim is, that Christianity, when fully understood, will be found to furnish both the rational doctrine of God and the scientific doctrine of man. Its best thinkers now accept the doctrine of evolution, and are coming to view man, not as immortal at his origin, but in his des-

tiny; not as having fallen from perfection, but as under process of training toward it. A truer view of the fatherhood of God in this process of educating His children is fast displacing the old view which set Him in wrathful antagonism to them.

The distinctive doctrine of Christianity is that, in the fullness of time, the point of perfect union between man and God was reached in the person of Jesus Christ, and that in consequence of this, manhood in Him became triumphant over death and invested with power to raise other sons of men to the same height of life and blessedness. It teaches also that this power of survival and of blessing must be confined at first to "the fittest," who in turn become saviours of others, until, in widening circles of blessing "all the kindreds of the earth" shall be reached. While it teaches that this redemptive power for the race is lodged in a holy seed, it also teaches that retribution for sin is wrought into the very laws and threads of race-life, so that every man may be sure that not only his sin, but the sins of his ancestors, will find him out. And yet so much more gracious is the operation of the law of recovery and healing, that we are assured in the second commandment that, while the sins of the father are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that do evil, mercy is shown to thousands of them that love God and keep His commandments.

One great Bible principle which has been overlooked in current Christianity is that the law of heredity works both ways, forward and backward. If my ancestor failed in the battle of life and dragged me down by his defeat, it would seem to be only fair that, if I were to succeed, I

might retrieve for him his failure. The race-life, emerging to victory in me, would have power to lift up those of its line who went before. Now, it is on just this principle that the whole Christian hope of a conquering seed and an ultimate race-redemption is based. The prophetic promises of the Bible are impossible of fulfillment on any other principle.

Now, it is because in ways like these the Christian scheme has been misconceived and perverted that liberal thought has so largely drawn away from it. I believe that scheme to be divine, and that it is large enough to include the widest range of thought which the scientific study of Nature and of man may open before us; that it is able to satisfy our highest aspirations of hope for ourselves or for the race. I believe that there is not a trace of truth in any of the world's philosophies or religions—and there are many such traces—but may find in Christianity a more perfect expression. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in the September *Atlantic*, speaks of the doctrine of evolution as opening before the race an "infinite hope." Christianity does the same, and shows how that hope is to be realized in the ultimate glorification of man through union with God. The widespread conviction of the heathen mind has been that this goal would be reached through successive reincarnations. But all that is true in the doctrine of metempsychosis can be gathered up and held in better form in the Christian doctrine of a resurrection of the dead, which is at once both discriminative and redemptive, and that thus admits of further discipline and of advancing stages in the progress of life; while the Christian doctrine of an elect seed carries with it also the an-

nouncement that each conquering son of man who reaches the goal of life eternal carries in his train many captive and kindred souls who before him have fallen by the way, becoming the source of succor and healing to both the living and the dead. The solidarity of the race in its climbing the heights of immortality is thus seen in a new light, and new and broader applications of the doctrine of human brotherhood, in its relation to man's present needs and to his future hopes, are at once suggested.

L. C. Baker.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

The mystery of man's future is proposed to be solved in these possible ways.

1. The orthodox solution views every member of the human family, even those as low down in the scale as Stanley's pigmies, as an individual on probation in this present life to determine his everlasting destiny.

2. The conditionalist rejects the notion that every man is born into the world the possessor of an immortal life, and holds that those who prove unworthy of this high destiny are, either at death or at a second death after resurrection, put out of existence.

3. The future probationist believes that imperfect souls who have not been adequately tested in this life under the light of the gospel, will be further disciplined and tested after death. Most believers in this theory locate the time of this testing before resurrection and final judgment. A few place it after resurrection. Some of these deny the

ordinary conception of a final day of judgment, and believe that the Christ has already entered upon this office of raising and judging men.

4. The Swedenborgian view is that the condition of men hereafter is precisely what they have made for themselves here, and that the only hell into which men are cast is that formed by their own falsities and lusts. A majority of souls, including the young, pass out of this life before their propensity to good or evil is finally determined, and into an intermediate state of angelic tutelege in which they make their final choice. But where the hell-condition is confirmed in any case there is no future passage out of it.

5. The universalist believes that every single soul will finally reach the goal of eternal blessedness and likeness to God.

6. The Brahmin, the Buddhist, and the adherents of most pagan religions, ancient and modern, hold to some form of soul-transmigration. Human souls, according to acquired character, pass into other bodies, and the work of their discipline is carried on through an indefinite series of living forms until the good attain rest by absorption into God.

We have endeavored to avoid the defects and to combine the merits of these various theories in one more comprehensive, and based upon these essential Scripture principles: 1. As death is the wages of sin, resurrection lies at the other pole of the divine dealing, and is essentially redemptive. 2. Scripture knows of but one way by which man lives again after death, and that is through a resurrection from the dead. The common view, therefore, of resurrection as a distant hope must be corrected or all the dead

must be viewed as still unconscious. 3. All hope for the rescue of mankind from the grasp of death is connected with the triumph of an elect seed who become their deliverers. This feature is so important and it connects itself so readily with the scientific view of the divine process of life in nature that we find in it the key to any true solution of this mystery. It is an application in this higher realm of the law of survival, only it goes further and makes the fittest who survive the depositaries of potential life for the restoration and blessing of the less fit.

We are disposed, therefore, to regard the masses of humanity as struggling upward along the scale of life, and that the spirits of the dead who die in their sins, as do the vast majority, are still held in union with this body of humanity to which they belong, not unconscious except in respect of their former selves, and entering into some form of connection with kindred living members of the race, and in such a way as to be interested in the battle of life they wage on this flesh and blood arena. If science affirms that we know nothing of life preserved without an organism, this view provides for the difficulty. The living organisms of the race are also the receptacles for its dead. If science declares that an outside realm of life in happiness or misery is beyond its ken, we point to regions of heaven and hell in these heights and depths of human experience around us. We must, of course, go beyond the ken of science when we affirm that the highest souls in this series of humanity acquire power to form for themselves a higher organism than this of flesh and blood—that there are bodies celestial as well as terrestrial, and that the re-

surrection of the dead is not complete until they pass out of union with this flesh and blood humanity, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But even here, although science may be dumb, she is deprived of all right to scoff or even to reject.

The fact that there are such triumphant souls is the distinctive fact to which Christianity bears witness, and of which it furnishes a supreme example. And, as has been said, the future deliverance of the human race is dependent upon it, inasmuch as this Conquering Seed becomes the depositaries of that power and life by which the race is ever ascending out of the depths of sensual and carnal existence toward that higher life which is life indeed, because eternal and divine.

If any one is disposed to smile at the idea that the living man may hold within the range of his being and control other souls who have passed out of this life, we ask him to remember that the life-forces of which the human organism is the centre are represented in Scripture as ranging through all depths and heights. We have not yet begun to understand the wide relations of man to the universe of which he is the heir. We ask him also to reflect that it is fundamental with the Bible to view the race as an organism, and the nation—Israel, for example—as a unit in which the dead are embraced with the living in one divine economy, and that it never views the living as attaining to blessing in the future apart from the dead with whom they are connected. All we are contending for is that the roots of this union are imbedded in the organic structure of the race, and control all the processes of its multiplication and development.

WHAT IT EXPLAINS.

The principle that the existence of the dead is preserved for restoration by connection in some unknown way with that of the living, so that humanity is to be conceived of as an organism in which the dead are embraced, is a most fruitful one. It explains:

1. The facts of human history and of individual human experience.

2. It reveals a great law of life as the basis upon which God deals with the race as a unit in its responsibility, in its fall and restoration, in punishment and reward.

3. It explains why Israel is always viewed as a living unit through successive generations, with unity in responsibility and penalty and destiny.

4. It explains why Moses and the prophets have nothing to say to Israel concerning a future hell of punishment and heaven of reward, and why the future of the individual was by them always connected with the future of their race.

5. It gives a theory of heaven and hell viewed as present facts in human experience as well as future states, in harmony with Scripture, and one which the rational and even the scientific mind may reasonably accept.

6. It quickens men to the highest sense of individual responsibility for their own salvation and that of their fellow-men, and supplies the highest motives for personal purity and consecration.

7. It explains the mystery of election—of a chosen class suffering and victorious for their brethren.

8. It shows why the Christianity of the New Testament is a mission of mercy to the bodies as well as to the souls of men.

9. It settles the controversy between post and pre-millenarians in that it shows that the salvation of the world is bound up in the victory and manifestation of a chosen seed, but shows also how the basis of this manifestation is laid in the constitution of humanity and is being prepared for in everything that goes to improve and bless it, and that it is an evolution as well as a crisis.

THERE is a class of interpreters who believe themselves to be the special friends and protectors of the Bible, who are yet scornful of any attempt to reconcile its doctrines with those of science. They place all deductions which seem to clash with their favorite interpretations of Scripture under the head of that wisdom of this world which is at enmity with God. They forget that if God made the world He must have filled it with traces of Himself, and that He has other ways of revealing Himself to men than through His written Word. We have no right to shut our ears to the voice of Truth from whatever quarter it may reach us. And as Truth is always self-consistent, no higher service to it can be rendered than to attempt to reduce its apparently discordant utterances into harmony.

A CHILD can very well understand punishment; nor does it at all love the less, but rather the more, those who punish it justly and for its good. But punishment extending into infinity, beyond justice; punishment whose aim

and result is the evil, not the good, of the sufferer—this is an idea utterly opposed to all the instincts of childhood. Of course, the poor little mind takes in the shocking doctrine presented to it like poison from its mother's hand. But the results are fatal. In one it is indifference, in another dislike, in another an atrophy of the religious nature, in a fourth a fever of terror, from which the soul escapes only by casting off all belief. Even when the most fortunate end is reached, and the man throws away in adult life the doctrine taught him in childhood, even then for long years the shadow remains over him. We return to early fears as well as loves many a time before we relinquish them forever.—*Selected.*

A DILEMMA.—Either the Bible is a self-contradictory book, or its frequent promises of blessing to the whole human race, through a Redeemer from death require us to locate the "eternal punishment" it threatens in that hell (sheol) into which men pass before resurrection. A punishment by death, and which casts down to hell, cannot be endless if it is to be interrupted by this promised recovery from death.

WE need not go outside the familiar realm of human experience to find the hell in which men are held in captivity and suffering for sin. The fact that this pit was dug for them largely by the sins of ancestors, whose morbid traits and tempers they inherit, shows how the living and the dead may be linked together in this experience. But it is a blessed compensation that by the same law of union in race-life those who learn the lessons of suffering, and who overcome the sins that produce it, may also help to liberate from captivity those whose iniquities they bear.

NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS.

A STRANGE CONFERENCE.—For the first time, probably, in the Christian era a convention composed of Christian ministers and Jewish Rabbis has been held. "Why the Jews do not accept Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah" was the question that drew them together. It was held in Chicago. The discussion was friendly in tone, and occupied two or three days.

We gather from the reported speeches of the Rabbis that their objections to the Christian claim were mainly these:

1. The doctrine of the Trinity with which that claim has been identified is without warrant in the Old Testament, and entirely repugnant to the fundamental idea of God which the Jewish race was set apart to proclaim.
2. The doctrine of the fall and of a vicarious atonement to rescue man from the consequences of it is equally without warrant, and inimical to any right conception of the righteousness of God, and to the production of righteous character in man.
3. The doctrine of the eternal punishment, in hell, of a large portion of mankind is nowhere taught in the Old Testament, and is destructive of the true idea of God and of His fatherly relation to mankind.

It is manifest that these objections to Christianity relate to certain doctrines which are supposed to be inherent in the system, rather than to the system itself. Perhaps, if the doctrines of the Trinity and atonement and of future punishment were more perfectly stated these objections would disappear. There is no doubt that there is a veil upon the Jewish mind with respect to the truth which we see so clearly, that Jesus is the Christ and that He came to confirm the promises made to the fathers. But it becomes Christian people to ask, How far they are responsible for helping to keep this veil before their face, by steadfastly adhering to imperfect statements of the Christian faith which have had their day, and which cannot stand before the advancing light which comes from a deeper knowledge of God, as revealed in His word and works. For ourselves, we hold firmly to the essential facts of the divine nature and sonship of Jesus, to the ransom of mankind

from death through His death, and their deliverance, not only from sin, but from the body in which it resides, in the power of His resurrection. We hold also to His eternal judgment of the world in righteousness, without which no man can see God. But we regret to say that these first principles of the doctrine of Christ were not properly presented at that Conference, nor will they ever be accepted by the Jewish mind, nor by the worldly or the scientific Gentile mind which now so largely rejects them, until they are more comprehensively grasped by the mind of the Church itself, and freed from the dogmatic accretions beneath which they have been obscured.

There was, therefore, much force in the caustic words of the aged Rabbi when he appealed to the Christians present to first expend their efforts upon the large and influential class in Christendom which the Church was unable to retain or to convince, before they directed them toward the conversion of Israel.

As our Lord has said, the Church herself must come into unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God before the world, either Jew or Gentile, will believe that He was sent of the Father.

THE "FREE CHRISTIAN."—A paper bearing this title has been started in London, by Mr. Frederick Parker, a layman of the Church of England, the object of which is to provide a channel through which every variety of Christian, who holds to and honors the One Name, can give utterance to his thought for the common benefit of all. The editor holds definite convictions of Christian truth, but believes that no one has yet found out the whole truth, and that in the search for it we are to be helpers one of another. It is only "with all saints" that the Church shall be able to comprehend the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. She has been long and vainly trying to find unity along the paths of narrow dogmatism. It is time we were all brought to confess that "if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

It is evident from reading over the columns of this new paper

that the point at which earnest and godly men are most seeking light is the nature and duration of punishment of sin.

There is revolt all along the line against the old dogma of endless punishment. Some take refuge in belief in annihilation: more hold to some form of future probation. It is evident, however, that the modern discussion of this subject has not gone down to the bottom of it. The relation to it of the doctrine of the resurrection is not yet understood. Only a few among the ortho dox have been brought to see its redemptive character. And as to how the being of man is preserved after his dissolution by death, and until restored from it, we are still much in the dark.

It has been the aim of this magazine to throw the light of Scripture upon these great questions, and to show that it blends with the light that is now coming from every quarter upon the origin and destiny of man. We have believed from the outset that the true path to unity in the Church could never be traced until we have a clearer understanding of the goal toward which mankind, under God's great plan, is tending.

It is with unfeigned pleasure that we welcome this new laborer in this same field. Nothing but final good can come to the Church and to humanity from the reverent pursuit of the truth along all the paths in which men who are in mind and heart loyal to Christ are searching for it.

The following extract from the prospectus of this new publication will give an idea of its spirit and aim:

"We believe and know that in this our day God is raising up in isolation one here, another there, throughout the land, and under the fires of adverse surroundings; men who are feeling after a better hope, men not exclusively numbered among the eminent or learned of the earth, some being, mayhap, poor and of no reputation either in the Church or in the world, but made exceedingly rich by a fuller revelation of their God and Saviour, and to whom the loving Master is giving further though partial glimpses of those 'many things' which the Church in the days of His earthly ministry were not able to bear, and for which, maybe, she is not, even in this nineteenth century of her ministry, fully ready.

"In the search after these bright and glorious 'many things,' hidden away as they are under the surface of the Sacred Scriptures, and of which even the most favored of God's earthly sons

know only in part as yet, some have stopped at the half-way house of annihilationism, others may have been allured into the by-ways of universalism, while others have fallen fainting by the way, in peril of sinking into the depths of unbelief.

"To all such who may be seeking after more light and fuller truth in the revelations of the Bible, our entire and heartfelt sympathies go out, and from such as have the aptitude to teach we specially invite contributions to our columns of their thoughts and beliefs, not in the spirit of controversy of words (which gender strife without winning souls), not in the high tone of dogmatism, not in the assumption of having attained to all truth, but as fellow students in the Book of Life, and in comparative theology, each saying to each, 'Thus the word comes to me, how readest thou?'"

THE GOSPEL OF OPTIMISM.—This magazine has made controversy with orthodoxy for its failure to give due place to the universalistic side of Scripture teaching. We have insisted that no rounded view of Christian truth is possible which strips the word "all" of its proper meaning in the many promises of Scripture, and which especially denies to most of the all any blessing in the provision of a resurrection for all. As an instance of the strong impression made by this side of Scripture upon the mind of a learned and devoted man, we copy from *The Free Christian* the following with which Canon Wilberforce concludes an article in *The Christian Commonwealth* upon the "The Gospel of Optimism."

"It is the reiterated emphatic declaration of Holy Scripture that the whole world is a redeemed world, only we see not yet all things put under His feet. Not yet! but I believe in Jesus Christ, and accept Him without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind as God's message to the world. I believe He will reconcile ALL things unto God, that He is heir of ALL things, that the Father hath given Him authority over ALL flesh, and that ALL flesh shall see the salvation of God, that God will have ALL men to be saved, that He hath shut up ALL under sin, that He may have mercy upon ALL, that as in Adam ALL die even so in Christ shall ALL be made alive, and finally that God will gather into one ALL things in Christ. Thus saith the Scripture, and if I believe it I must be an optimist in my heart, though the 'whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain.'

"An ultimately victorious God, a vindicated Saviour, and a re-

stored humanity have become the central religious conviction of my maturer years. I know no other. I have not dreamt myself into it, for the last twenty years my life has been no dream; it has been spent in unceasing conflict with evil, and in constant contact with suffering, sorrow, and sin. I believe the conviction of a necessarily victorious God rarely ripens in early life, it may be called the midsummer shoot of faith. Beautiful, doubtless, especially after leafless winter, is the tender green that clothes the trees in spring; it is apt to lose its early brilliancy before July, and then appears, here and there, amidst the deeper color, the vivid emerald of the midsummer shoot which lasts on when earlier leaves are fading. Bright are the young enthusiasms that kindle the heart when first God is seen in Christ, but it is after toil and thought and prayer and conflict, when plans have failed and life has darkened and ideals have withered, that the mighty and unalterable 'SHALL' of God becomes intensified, and your faith runs and hardens into the mold of the doxology to the Lord's Prayer:—'THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.'

"So let it be. It is the creed of the Christ. No other faith can wall you in with adamant like this. Value, use as much as you will and as much as you can, every orthodox catholic doctrine, every legitimate external observance, every time-honored phrase, definition, expression, every spiritual medicine and ministerial aid in the surgery of the Church; but if you would maintain a fearless attitude in a world like this, grip fast the creed of dogmatic optimism, thrust aside generalities and platitudes, and stand face to face with God. With humble but unshaken confidence, even when lips are trembling and life is dark, and evil seems victorious, challenge the Almighty with the cry, 'Doubless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, from Everlasting is Thy Name.'"

PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.—A writer in the New York *Sun*, in speaking of the growth of this idea among Episcopalians, goes on to say:

"The true impulse of the Presbyterian movement for the revision of the Westminister Confession is a growing desire for future probation, and future probation makes prayer for the dead as logical as prayer for the living. This desire prevails among the Congregationalists also, and it is at the bottom of the troubles which now afflict their Missionary Board. The Andover school is committed to the future probation theory, with all its consequences, and the Union Theological Seminary of this city sustains it as 'progressive sanctification,' to use the synonym of Professor

Briggs. Hence the advocates of prayer for the dead in the Episcopal Church are expressing a growing Protestant sentiment, though, bolder than the rest, they push it to its logical conclusion."

It is unquestionably true that an insurrection is arising in the whole Protestant camp against the old dogma which cruelly shuts the door of hope in Christ's redemption upon the great mass of the dead. What the Church must come to, sooner or later, is the apprehension that this redemption, instead of being applicable only to the living, was provided specially to meet the case of the dead, and that their salvation is inseparably bound up in that of the living. In the view of God, and in the great organism of humanity, the existence of the dead is so preserved and perpetuated in that of the living that "they without us cannot be made perfect," and hence every reason why we should work out our own salvation in this life is retained and re-enforced.

A Misapplied Text.—A late number of the *Old Testament Student* thus disposes of one of the fictions upon which the current notions of man's future is based.

Ecclesiastes xi, 3.—Professor Davison has written in the *Methodist Recorder* protesting against the common misinterpretations of this text, some of which are based upon what reads thus, "Where the tree falleth, there it shall lie." "There is no such text in the Bible. The passage referred to runs thus: 'If a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.' In the context, the writer is urging the importance of faithful fulfillment of duty, regardless of consequences in the future which no man can forecast. The proverbial expression of verse 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters,' points the same lesson as St. Paul's, 'Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' 'But,' the preacher goes on to say, 'we cannot tell precisely how future events will be ordered, but it would be folly on that account to stint our labors and kindnesses, like a husbandman staying his hand to gaze into the sky and wonder what the weather will be. The laborer in the field does not know what rain the clouds contain, which way the wind will blow, nor how the tottering tree will fall. The course of events we must be content to leave, and diligently use our own opportunities, sowing such good seed of the kingdom as we can, leaving results with God.' There is, of course, no reference here to the future life, or the fact that man's lot in the next life is fixed at death, as certain popular hymns, and, perhaps, popular minis-

ters, have been accustomed to suggest. But the whole passage inculcates fidelity to duty while the opportunity is ours, lest the time come when it will be too late (Eccles. xii, 1, 7, 13, 14)."

THE ANDOVER REVIEW quotes from Professor Lotze in his "Microcosmus," as follows:

"To hold that the claims of particular times and individual men may be despised, and all their misfortunes disregarded if only mankind improve upon the whole is, however suggested by noble feelings, merely enthusiastic thoughtlessness. The humanity which is capable of progress can never be anything other than the sum of individual living men, and for them nothing is progress which does not mean an increase of happiness and perfection for those very souls which had suffered in a previous imperfect state."

Upon this the editor well remarks:

"There is rational comfort in the thought that by gradual development, by all the struggle and toil of a slowly advancing human life, a greater good will be attained finally than by a less severe discipline and by a shorter path. But what if the ultimate benefit is only for those who live at the close of the campaign, and who survive the waste and slaughter? In a word, what conception of history can be formed that makes the successive generations co-partners in the fruit of their suffering, discipline, and toil? Is the meaning of history a good worked out for all, or a result to be shared only by surviving children as inheritors of a fortune which others have acquired?"

The answer to these questions is contained in the principles set forth in the previous pages of this number of WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PEIRCE CITY, MO., Nov. 21st, 1890.

DEAR BROTHER BAKER:—Enclosed find $1.00 which please apply on my subscription. I am still a warm friend to your magazine, for I believe you are doing the same kind of work as a reformer, in showing up the errors of the Presbyterian faith, as Martin Luther did in the fifteenth century, as touching the error and apostasy of the large body which excommunicated him for his fidelity to the Truth as he understood it. And I trust you may be long spared to hold up that grand central doctrine of the Gospel of Christ—*i. e.*, "The Resurrection," in its true light as a *redemptive* process. You seem to have a clear idea of the meaning of the word "Anastasis," and that a coming forth from the tomb,

or an awakening from the dust of the earth, cannot properly be called "Anastasis," for it means much more, even the *completion* of the process. And since you seem to look at it in this light, I am puzzled to know why you should make any exceptions, when you know that the Word plainly teaches in many places that *all* the dead shall have resurrection, "both the just and unjust." And Jesus told the Sadducees that all who obtain it ("the *Anastasis* from the dead") would neither marry nor be given in marriage, "neither *can they die* any more." You admit that "*all*" will be resurrected, or have an "Anastasis," then why should you differ with Jesus and say *some* can and *will* die again? And, again, I think, the name of your magazine—WORDS OF RECONCILIATION—is a grand one and most appropriate. But when Paul tells us that "God was, in Christ, reconciling *the world* (*all men*) unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses* unto them," without a *single* exception, then why should *you* make exceptions, and teach that God will "impute their trespasses" unto *some*, and also that He will not reconcile quite all of the world unto Himself? But I presume you are doing just the work God would have you do, and perhaps much more effectively with your few exceptions among the creeds which are so full of "ifs" and "exceptions," than if you preached a *full* Gospel, good news to absolutely all. To preach that God "*is* the Saviour of all men," as well as the especial few now being chosen as a channel of blessing and salvation of the "all men" in the age to come, is news too good to be true in the estimation and understanding of the masses, and even among those with "ears to hear," in the Presbyterian and many other Churches, to step, at one bound, from their narrow channels out on to the broad plane of the universal fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of man would be too great a step. And no doubt you are doing more good with your present intermediate truths and views. That God may abundantly bless you in your noble work, is my prayer. Amen!

Yours, "In the love of the Truth,"

J. W. BRITE.

I would be glad to have you publish and reply to this communication, if you deem it expedient.

We publish the above letter very willingly, because it asserts something which is often brought up from the other side in disproof of our doctrine—namely, that it logically runs out into universalism. We admit that our view of resurrection is a form of restorationism. But then the Scriptures are full of the hope that all things shall be restored, and how can one be faithful to Scripture who denies the restitution of all things? We are obliged to give to the word "all" its proper weight in the many promises

where it occurs, and not to be a restorationist is to disbelieve the Gospel.

Our correspondent sees this so strongly that he insists that nothing less than the salvation unto eternal life of every man who lives or ever has lived will satisfy this hope. We have not been able to go so far, because there is another side to Scripture unto which we must also give heed. Some kind of irretrievable destruction is certainly there threatened against the ungodly. It is usually assumed that one must subordinate one class of these Stripture teachings to the other, and be either universalist or orthodox. We think we can see a way by which we can hold on to the truth of both without sacrificing either.

If Mr. Brite has read recent numbers of this magazine with attention, he will have seen that we have advanced beyond the position he ascribes to us, concerning the second death of a portion of mankind. We are now ready to accept the doctrine of Anastasis at its full worth, and to believe that completed resurrection is, in all cases, salvation. We believe, too, that all will be raised. But, then, how much will there be left to raise out of the process of death and judgment—the consuming fire—through which man must pass? We have believed that the "loss of the soul," the "loss of themselves," against which men are so solemnly warned refers to such a stripping of sinful men—such a resurrection of judgment as must destroy the whole evil fabric of their former selves.

We believe, too, that personal identity through this change inheres only in the elements of goodness and virtue in human character, and by so much as these are lacking, personality will be destroyed. There is an inward core of being in every man which passes safe through the fire. To this extent salvation is universal. But where there has been built up around it no outward fabric of righteous life, there it must begin a future life naked and stripped of those prerogatives which insure continuity of personal self-consciousness. As to how far and under what conditions these may be recovered is not yet made plain to us, except that those who win the crown of life become the ministers to those who have failed, of whatever recovery is possible in their case.